

# Police in Brazil Promise More Raids on Drug Gangs

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RIO DE JANEIRO, June 28 (AP) — Police trained assault rifles on residents of a gang-infested shantytown as they went back to school and work Thursday, pledging a war on drug gangs after a raid that killed 19 suspected criminals on Wednesday.

More than 1,300 heavily armed officers exchanged gunfire with gangs for hours in one of Rio's most dangerous slums on Wednesday, and José Mariano Beltrame, Rio's state security secretary, promised more incursions to oust the gangs that rule over most of the city's 600 slums.

He said Thursday that the heavy show of force — which had also wounded bystanders who were caught in the cross-fire — signaled the end to an unofficial “silent nonaggression pact” between officers and drug gangs.

The raid in Alemão, home to more than 160,000 people, “is only the first of many others we will carry out,” Mr. Beltrame told CBN Radio.

He did not elaborate, but the city has a long history of officials making deals with drug gangs that give the traffickers free rein in slums if they do not cause trouble in Rio's affluent beach neighborhoods.

On Thursday, sporadic gunfire broke out in Alemão after gang members opened fire on a police car, and officers frisked residents as they entered and left the shantytown.

But businesses reopened, and children started going back to school.

Marcelo Santos, 26, moaned in pain from his hospital bed as he described being shot in the arm and leg while heading to his girlfriend's home during some of the fiercest fighting. He said he did not know whether he was shot by the police or by traffickers.

“I heard a hail of bullets and spent the next four hours bleeding in a neighbor’s house until the fighting let up and I could get to the hospital,” Mr. Santos said.

The trouble in Alemão broke out after two police officers were killed on May 2. Skirmishes between the authorities and criminals have killed and wounded dozens over the past two months, and Wednesday’s combat pushed the death toll to 46.

The police said it could take much more time to restore order. They added that all the people who died in the operation were drug traffickers. But the prospect of more raids made slum community leaders nervous.

“For the police, everyone is a drug trafficker, especially after they’ve killed you,” said a community organizer, Edmundo Santos Oliveira.